

CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

BY
R. D. BLACKMORE

Author of "LORNA DOONE," "ALICE LORRAINE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

One thing is certain—both Mr. Overshute and his mother must have been dead bodies with little hope of Christian burial, if that brave girl had not set forth on the Saturday night to help them. Mrs. Overshute had quite thrown up all hope of everything—save the mercy of God in a better world, and His justice upon her enemies—when quite in the dark this young girl came, while she was lying down on her back, and curtsayed, and asked her pleasure.

If Esther had not curtsayed, perhaps Mrs. Overshute in that state of mind would have taken her for an angel; though Etty's bonnet, made by herself, was not at all angelical. But she knew her for one of the lower orders, and belonging herself to a fine old race, she rallied her last energies with a power of condescension.

However, these are medical, physical, social, economical and perhaps even philosophical questions—wherein what remains except perpetual inquiry? Enough is to say that Russel Overshute, having long had a ringing in his ears, was rung out of that, and rung back to life by the lively peal of the fire bell. And ever since that, whenever he is ill—though it be only a little touch of gout—he immediately sends a good corpulent man to lay hold of the rope and swing to it. These things are of later date. For the present, this young man lay still in a very precarious state, with a feeble mother to pray for him.

But though the house lay still in sadness, loneliness and dull suspense, and though the doctors, having abandoned the case, had the manners not to come again, still from day to day there was some

striding along towards the quickest outlet to the country.

"How wonderful it is!" she said to herself, with tears all ready; "only the other day she was quite a little boy, and whipped a top, and cried if a pin ran into him. And now he is, far beyond all dispute, the finest young man in Oxford; he has the highest contempt for all vulgar sports, and he bolts the door of his bedroom. His father calls him thick and soft! Ah, he cannot understand his qualities! There is the deepest and purest well-spring of unintelligible poetry in Kit. His great mind is perturbed, and has hurried him into commuane with the evening star.

Before Mrs. Sharp had turned one page of her truly voluminous thoughts about her son, a sharp click awoke the front door lock, and a steady and well-jointed step made creaks on the old oak staircase.

"Miranda, I have some work to do to-night," said Mr. Sharp, in his quiet, even voice; and I thought it better to come up and tell you, so that you need not expect me again. Just have the fire in the office lighted. I can work better there than I can upstairs. If I should ring about 10 o'clock it will be for a cup of coffee. If I do not ring then, send everybody to bed, and do not expect me until you see me."

"Certainly, Luke, I quite understand," answered Mrs. Sharp, having been for years accustomed to such arrangements; "but, my dear, before you begin, can you spare me five minutes, for a little conversation?"

"Of course I can, Miranda, I am always at your service."

"Then, Luke, will you answer me only



HE LOCKED THE DOOR AND LOOKED OUT OF THE WINDOW.

little growth of liveliness. Hardenow came almost daily, having put his class of striders under a deputy six-leaguer; the Squire also might be expected; and even Zachary Cripps.

CHAPTER XVII.

In the meanwhile, Mrs. Luke Sharp was growing very anxious about her son, and only child and idol, Christopher. Not that there was anything at all amiss with his bodily health, so far at least as she could see; but that he seemed so unsettled in his mind, so absent and preoccupied. Wherever he was, he always seemed to be wanting to be somewhere else, and he hated to be looked at; while he ran up into his own loft when he thought there was nobody watching.

"Kit, now my darling Kit, do tell me," said Mrs. Sharp for about the fiftieth time, as she sat with her son in the sweet spring twilight, at the large western window of Cross-Duck House; "what is it that makes you sigh so? You almost break your poor mother's heart. I never did know you sigh, my own one."

"Once more, mother, I have the greatest objection to being called 'Kit.' It sounds so small, and—so horribly prosaic. All the dictionaries say that it means either the outfit of a common soldier, or else a diminutive kind of fiddle."

"Christopher, I really beg your pardon. I know how much loftier you are, of course; but I cannot get over the habit, Kit. Well, well, then—my darling, I hope you are not at all above being 'my darling,' Kit."

"Mother, you may call me what you like. It can make no difference in my destinies."

"Christopher, you make my blood run cold. My darling, I implore you not to sigh so. Your dear father pays my allowance on Monday. I know what has long been the aspiration of your heart, Kit, you shall have a live badger of your own."

"I hate the very name of rats and badgers. Everything is so low. How can you look at that noble sunset, and be full of badgers? Mother, it grieves me to leave you alone; but how can I help it, when you go on so? I shall go for a walk on the Botley road."

The young man threw a light cloak on his shoulder, and set his eyebrows sternly, and his countenance looked very picturesque. It occurred to his mother that she had never seen anything more noble. As soon as she had heard him bang the door, Mrs. Sharp ran back to the window, whence she could watch all Cross Duck Lane, and she saw him

one question?—have you observed how very strangely Kit has been going on for some time now?"

"Yes, Mrs. Sharp, I have observed it. You need not be at all uneasy about it. I am observing him very closely. When I disapprove, I shall stop it at once."

"But surely, my dear, surely I, his mother, am not to be kept in the dark about it? I know that you always take your own course, and your course is quite sure to be the right one; but surely, my dear, when something important is evidently going on about my own child, you would never have the heart to keep it from me. I could not endure it; indeed I could not. I should fret myself away to skin and bone."

"It would take a long time to do that, my dear," replied Mr. Sharp, as he looked with satisfaction at her fine plump figure. "In the first place, then, you must promise me, whether my plan turns out well or ill, on no account to blame me for it, but to give me the credit of having acted for the best throughout."

"Nothing can be easier than to promise that. My dear, you always have acted for the best; and what is more, the best always comes of it."

"Very well, you promise that; also, you must pledge yourself to conceal from everyone, and most of all from Christopher, everything I am about to tell you, and to act under my directions."

"To be sure, my dear; to be sure, I will. Nothing is more reasonable than that I should keep your secrets."

"Miranda," he said, "I will tell you something such as you never heard before. I have made a bold stroke, a very bold one; but I think it must succeed. And justice is with me, as you will own, after all the attempts to rob us. Perhaps you never heard a stranger story; but still I am sure you will agree with me, that in every step I have taken I am most completely and perfectly justified."

"Luke, I declare you quite make me nervous. I shall be afraid to go to bed to-night. Really a stranger, or a timid person, would think you were going to confess a murder."

The lawyer arose. He locked the door and looked out of the window. Then he said:

"Miranda, you must not be foolish. Now please not to interrupt me once; but ask your questions afterwards. To begin at the very beginning, you will do me the justice to remember that I have worked very hard for my living. And I have prospered well, Miranda, having you as both the foundation and the crown of my prosperity; was perfectly

satisfied, as you know, living quite up to my wishes, and putting a little cash by every year of our lives, and paying on a heavy life insurance, in case of my own life dropping—for the sake of you and Christopher. You know all that?"

"Darling Luke, I do. But you make me cry when you talk like that."

"Very well. That is as it should be. We were as happy as need be expected, until the great wrong befell us—the fierce injustice of losing every farthing to which we were clearly entitled. You were the proper successor to all the property of old Fermatage. That old curmudgeon and wholesale poisoner of the university made a fool of himself, towards his latter end, by marrying Miss Oglender. Old Black-Strap, as of course we know, had no other motive for doing such a thing, except his low ambition to be connected with a good old family. Ever since he began life as a bottle boy in the cellars of old Jerry Pigand—"

"He never did that, Luke. How can you speak so of my father's own first cousin? He was an extremely respectable young man; my father always said so."

"While he was making his money, Miranda, of course he was respectable. And everybody respected him, as soon as he had made it. However, I have not the smallest intention of reproaching the poor old villain. He acted according to his lights, and they led him very badly. A foolish ambition induced him to marry that pompous old maid Joan Oglender, who had been jilted by Commodore Patch, the son of the famous captain. We all know what followed; the old man was but a doll in the hands of his lady-wife. He left all the scrapings of his life for her to do what she pleased with—at least, everybody supposes so."

"What do you mean, Luke?" asked Mrs. Sharp, having inkling of legal surprises. "Do you mean that there is a later will? Has he done justice to me, after all?"

"No, my dear. He never saved his soul by attending to his own kindred. But he just had the sense to make a little change at last, when his wife would not come near him. You know what he died of. It was coming on for weeks; though at last it struck him suddenly. The port wine fungus of his old vaults grew into his lungs and stopped them. It had shown for some time in his face and throat; and his wife was afraid of catching it. She took it to be some infectious fever, of which she is always terribly afraid. The old man knew that his time was short; but take to his bed he would not. Of all born men the most stubborn he was, as any man must be, to get on well. 'If I am to die of the fungus,' he said, 'I will have a little more of it.' And he went, and with his own hands hunted up a magnum of port, which had been laid by from the vintage of 1745, in the first days of Jerry Pigand. But before that, he had sent for me; and I was there when he opened it."

"Luke, you take my breath away. Such wonderful things I have never heard! At least, not in our own family."

"Of course, my dear. We all accept wonders with quietude, till they come home to us. Well, when he fetched out this old bottle, it was fungus inside from heel to neck. He held it up against the light, and the glass being whiter than now they make and the wine gone almost white with age, there you could see this extraordinary growth, like cords in the bottle, and valves across it, and a long yellow sheath like a crocus-flower. I had never seen anything like it before; but he knew all about it. 'Ah, I know a gentleman,' he grunted in his throat—he never could say 'gentleman,' as you remember—a gentleman as would give a hundred guineas for this here bottle. Quibbles, he shouldn't have it for a thousand. My boy, you and I will drink it. Say no, and I'll cut off your wife with a halfe penny.' Miranda, what could I do but try to humor him to the utmost? And really it was more like eating than drinking wine; for all the body was gone into the fungus. Nastier stuff I never tasted; but, luckily, he took the lion's share. 'Now, Quibbles, I'll tell you a secret,' he said, after swallowing at least a quart; 'a very pretty girl came and kissed me 'tother day, in among these very bottles. Such a little duck—not a bit ashamed or feared of my fungus, as my missus is. And her breath was as sweet as the violets of '20! 'Well, now, my little dear,' thinks I, as I stood back and looked at her, 'that was kind of you to kiss an old man a-dying of port wine fungus! And if he only lives another day, you shall have the right to kiss the royal family, if you care to do it.' Quibbles, I wouldn't call in you, nor any other thief of a lawyer. Lawyers are very well over a glass; but keep 'em outside of the cellar, say I. Very good company, in their way; but the only company I put trust in is the one I have dealt with all my life—and many a thousand pounds I have paid them.—The Royal Wine Company of Oporto. So now, if anything happens to me—though I am not in such a hurry to be binned away, and walled up for the resurrection—Quibbles, wait six months; and then you go to the Royal Oporto Company, and ask for a gentleman of the name of Jolly Fellows."

"Now, Luke, I am all anxiety to hear," exclaimed Mrs. Sharp, with a sudden interruption, "what was the end of this very strange affair?"

(To be continued.)

Does Not Hold Good Always. "There's nothing like perseverance; it wins out in the long run."

"Not always; did you ever see a hen on a porcelain egg?"—Brooklyn Life.

A father recently overheard his young son use a word he did not approve, and calling the child to him said: "My son, if you will promise me never to use that word again, I'll give you a silver dime." The little fellow promised, and true to his word refrained. About a week later he went to his father and said: "Papa, I've learned a new word worth fifty cents."

INTERESTING LETTER WRITTEN BY A NOTABLE WOMAN

Mrs. Sarah Kellogg of Denver, Colorado, Bearer of the Woman's Relief Corps, Sends Thanks to Mrs. Pinkham.



The following letter was written by Mrs. Kellogg, of 1628 Lincoln Ave., Denver, Colo., to Mrs. Pinkham, Lynn, Mass.: "Dear Mrs. Pinkham: For five years I was troubled with a tumor, which kept growing, causing me intense agony and great mental depression. I was unable to attend to my house work, and life became a burden to me. I was confined for days to my bed, lost my appetite, my courage and all hope. "I could not bear to think of an operation, and in my distress I tried every remedy which I thought would be of any use to me, and reading of the value of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to sick women decided to give it a trial. I felt so discouraged that I had little hope of recovery, and when I began to feel better, after the second week, thought it only meant temporary relief; but to my great surprise I found that I kept gaining, while the tumor lessened in size. "The Compound continued to build up my general health and the tumor seemed to be absorbed, until, in seven months, the tumor was entirely gone and I a well woman. I am so thankful for my recovery that I ask you to publish my letter in newspapers, so other women may know of the wonderful curative powers of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."

When women are troubled with irregular or painful menstruation, weakness, leucorrhoea, displacement or ulceration of the womb, that bearing-down feeling, inflammation of the ovaries, backache, flatulence, general debility, indigestion and nervous prostration, they should remember there is one tried and true remedy. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound at once removes such trouble.

No other medicine in the world has received such widespread and unqualified endorsement. No other medicine has such a record of cures of female troubles. Refuse to buy any other medicine.

Mrs. Pinkham invites all sick women to write her for advice. She has guided thousands to health. Address, Lynn, Mass.

Health is too valuable to risk in experiments with unknown and untried medicines or methods of treatment. Remember that it is Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound that is curing women, and don't allow any druggist to sell you anything else in its place.

Chipped granite and clay combine to make durable brick. This is a recent Scotch invention.

In Baltimore an electric arc light costs \$67.49 a year; in New Orleans, \$69, and in New York City, \$146.

Nearly all Japanese boys are strong. This is to a large extent due to the fact that a law prohibits Japanese youths from using tobacco until they are twenty years of age.

The heaviest woman in Michigan is Miss Hattie Aldridge, whose home is on a farm six miles southwest of Earsie. Miss Aldridge is twenty-six years old, is six feet in height, and weighs 406 pounds.

For Hot Weather

A FREE BOTTLE OF

Mull's Grape Tonic

TO ANYONE WHO WILL WRITE FOR IT NOW

Have you Constipation, Stomach Trouble, Indigestion, Dyspepsia, Blood Poison, Skin Diseases, Sores, Sudden Bowel Trouble, Diarrhea, Cholera, Etc.?

No one whose bowels are healthy and active contracts these complaints. Invariably they are the result of Constipation which means decayed, poisoned and dying bowels or intestines. Check diarrhea and you are liable to fatal blood poison—a phytic makes you worse. There is only one right course and that is to treat the cause. Revive and strengthen the bowels and intestines. We will prove to you that Mull's Grape Tonic cures Constipation and all these terrible Bowel troubles because it cleanses the Blood and makes the intestines practically new. It feeds the starved condition and brings them back to life—nothing else will. For hot weather ills it has no equal.

WRITE FOR THIS FREE BOTTLE TODAY
Good for ailing children and nursing mothers.

FREE COUPON

Send this coupon with your name and address and your druggist's name, for a free bottle of Mull's Grape Tonic, Stomach Tonic and Constipation Cure.

To Mull's Grape Tonic Co.,
21 Third Ave., Rock Island, Ill.
Give Full Address and Write Plainly
The \$1.00 bottle contains nearly three times the 50c size. At drug stores.

The genuine has a date and number stamped on the label—take no other from your druggist.

Confidence is a plant of slow growth.

Some spinsters find a valuable excuse for spinsterhood in the Divorce Evil.

The interior of a piece of gold-bearing quartz was inspected recently with the Rentgen rays in an Oregon town, and veins of gold are said to have been as plainly visible as if they had been on the surface.

THREE YEARS AFTER.

Eugene E. Lario, of 751 Twentieth Avenue, ticket seller in the Union Station, Denver, Colo., says:

"You are at liberty to repeat what I first stated through our Denver papers about Doan's Kidney Pills in the summer of 1899, for I have had no reason in the interim to change my opinion of the remedy. I was subject to severe attacks of backache, always aggravated if I sat long at a desk. Doan's Kidney Pills absolutely stopped my backache. I have never had a pain or twinge since."

Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y. For sale by all druggists, price 50 cents per box.



Facts Are Stubborn Things

Uniform excellent quality for over a quarter of a century has steadily increased the sales of LION COFFEE, The leader of all package coffees.

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is now used in millions of homes. Such popular success speaks for itself. It is a positive proof that LION COFFEE has the Confidence of the people.

The uniform quality of LION COFFEE survives all opposition. LION COFFEE keeps its old friends and makes new ones every day.

LION COFFEE has even more than its Strength, Flavor and Quality to commend it. On arrival from the plantation, it is carefully roasted at our factories and securely packed in 1 lb. sealed packages, and not opened again until needed for use in the home. This precludes the possibility of adulteration or contact with germs, dirt, dust, insects or unclean hands. The absolute purity of LION COFFEE is therefore guaranteed to the consumer.

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